SCRIPPS-HOWARD

The Knoxville

Issue No. 29,402 — 523-3131

Copyright © 1978, The K

Knoxville, Tenn. 37901,

News-Sentinel

Final
HOME
Edition
Price 15 Cents

Knoxville News-Sentinel Company

Friday Evening, August 11, 1978

28 Pages, Two Sections

Prison Meeting

Rev. Jesse Jackson, in white suit and vest, and Mark Lane, left, lawyer for James Earl Ray, entered Brushy Mountain Penitentiary in Petros yesterday for a meeting with Ray on Ray's involvement in the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (UPI Telephoto)

Jackson Doubts Ray's Guilt After Talk

By ANNE POWELL 8/11/78
News-Sentinel Staff Writer

PETROS — A civil rights leader with Martin Luther King Jr. when he was assassinated emerged from a meeting here with the convicted killer and said he plans to meet Tuesday with U.S. Atty. Gen. Griffin Bell to try to get a trial for James Earl Ray.

Rev. Jesse Jackson, who was talking to Dr. King when he was shot during a 1968 Memphis garbage workers' strike, said "the tension built up in me" as he first met Ray here yesterday. "I knew I was looking at the man accused of killing Dr. King; yet I knew there is the possibility he might be innocent."

Ray initially pleaded guilty to killing Dr. King but has since said he was not guilty and has been seeking a trial.

"Not to fight for a trial is to be willing to accept a tradeoff between a $2 narcotics hustler and Dr. King," he said. "I have a profound doubt that he killed Dr. King. I think he was involved but I am convinced he did not act alone so I will work to get him a trial. The idea of a conspiracy is what prompts me to fight for a trial."

Ray goes this weekend to Washington, D.C., where he will appear before the House Assassination Committee Monday to testify on King's murder.

But Ray's attorney, Mark Lane, had harsh words for the committee which he called "a group of clowns." However, he said he endorses Ray's plans to testify

See JACKSON, Page 2

Jackson Doubts Ray's Guilt, Wants Trial

Starts on Page One

publicly before the committee.

"Ray will testify but he is not trying to convince the committee. They already have their minds made up. But hopefully the American news media will be there," Lane said.

He also challenged reporters to "ask G. Robert Blakey how much he was paid — and my guess is $50,000 — for selling his credentials to organized crime." He was critical of Blakey, the panel's chief counsel, for a Jan. 25 report of the committee that FBI and CIA clearance would be required to work for the committee.

Jackson said any fair investigation into the King murder will have to be conducted by a special committee because "the FBI is implicated and you can't ask the Government to investigate itself." It is Jackson's contention that the FBI was engaged in the coverup if not the actual conspiracy because "the FBI had been following Dr. King 24 hours a day from the time he received the Nobel Peace Prize until about an hour before he was killed. The motives of the FBI are far greater than this man's motive," he said.

Mr. Jackson said he began his meeting with Ray by asking him "point blank, 'Did you kill Dr. King?' He said, 'No.' We said, 'Prove it.'"

He said Ray told them he had almost no motive for killing King because he did not see him as an adversary and had no hostilities toward him or the black movement; that he has witnesses who can prove he was at the service station and not at the "flop house"; that his criminal history was one of non-violent narcotics hustling for pay; and that the bullet in King was never proved to have come from his rifle.

Jackson said his impression of Ray was that he was rational and that his recall was excellent. He questioned why Percy Foreman, Ray's attorney at the time, never called for a psychiatric examination of Ray after he spent eight months in solitary.

"It could be that he was a diversion of the grand scheme," he said. "There was so much contracting and hustling around the book situation, it was obvious neither of the lawyers took precautions to protect their client. The plea of guilty was not voluntary and was partly caused by Ray's confinement. Ray was under pressure for a long period of time to enter a guilty plea and not go to trial."

"There was no examination to see if he was competent to enter a guilty plea," Dr. Alvin Poussaint, assistant professor of psychiatry at Harvard University and dean of students at Harvard Medical School, said. "Ray said it usually takes him six to eight weeks to recover after solitary and that he gives in easily to his lawyers. Then he realizes later what he has done. That should be grounds for a trial."

Dr. Poussaint and Lane accompanied Jackson to the meeting.

Dr. Poussaint said Ray "didn't show much nervousness; was calm and cool and answered questions directly and with cordiality, respect and concern. He did not come on strong as we had expected he would. He has a good vocabulary, is articulate and reasons well. But he is aware of his lack of credibility. Over-all Ray had a convincing quality about him."

Prison Warden Stonney Lane said the press was excluded from the meeting simply because his facilities would not accompany the 50 reporters who awaited the Jackson party's arrival. He said the Tennessee Bureau of Criminal Identification had notified him three months ago of a second alleged escape plan for Ray but he had taken no new precautions.

"It's a bad habit watching one man," he said. "I've got 321 (maximum security) back there that are extreme escape risks and I know they're going to try to escape if they can. It's just a matter of simple arithmetic: you watch one and you'll have 10 run out."

He also said he has asked Federal officials for "two hours notice" to have Ray ready to go to Washington this weekend.